

Trends for the near future

By  [marian.salzman](#)

6 Jan 2020

I've worn several hats over the course of my career, but the one that people most associate me with is 'trendspotter'. I've been an observer and decoder of trends since childhood. It's who I am. I recognised long ago that I'm incapable of shopping for groceries, people-watching at the airport or surfing the web without instinctively looking for patterns.



Global trendspotter, Marian Salzman.

I am endlessly fascinated by people's experiences and motivations and I love piecing together clues to figure out what's going to be next.

This tendency has been helpful to my clients and employers. In the knowledge economy, every glimpse of the probable future carries monetary value. A major food manufacturer that didn't realise in time that the Atkins bubble was going to burst or that plant-based foods were going to become the next big thing missed out on a tremendous opportunity.

I've often joked that my tombstone will contain a reference to metrosexuality. Some 15 years since I drew the world's attention to the phenomenon of straight men embracing their "feminine" sides, I still have people come up to me to talk about it.

“ What's important to understand is that I didn't invent metrosexuality — or any other trend, for that matter. I'm a trendspotter, not a trend maker. ”

What I did create was the so-called “metrosexual mania” that gripped the world back in 2003 and 2004. I borrowed a decade-old term coined by a British journalist, although I changed its meaning, to describe what I was seeing on the streets and in stores every day: straight men taking more care with their appearance, showing greater interest in fashion and becoming less allergic to the idea of \$100 haircuts and spa treatments. And BOOM! A global media frenzy.

I'd like to share with you a dozen trends I've seen taking shape in 2019 for 2020. Some are already here in force; others are just beginning to appear on the horizon. I believe all of them have important implications, for businesses or for society as a whole...



Marian Salzman 8 Jan 2019



1. We are desperate for touch

Our modern world has been proficient at making things faster and (sometimes) more efficient, but it has done so at the expense of human connection. We don't take the time to bond with our fellow human beings the way we once did. Not emotionally, and certainly not physically. More and more, each of us lives within our own individualised cubes—listening to playlists streamed exclusively to our ears, hunched over entertainment on our devices, connecting with colleagues via email or text rather than in person.



#AskAfrikaAhaMoment: Don't force every engagement into an experience...

Leigh Andrews 22 Nov 2019



The three-martini lunch has been replaced by group chats on Microsoft Teams. And we are feeling the impact, seeking out physical contact in all sorts of places to make up for this loss of connection.

In the last year, I've known several people who have purchased **weighted blankets** for themselves or a loved one. If you're [not familiar](#) with the product, they're basically duvet covers filled with small pellets or beads made out of plastic or glass. The adult versions range from around 10 to 30 pounds.

They feel a bit like that lead apron you wear when getting X-rays at the dentist. The blankets are sized to cover the individual sleeper, not the bed. This is not a shared experience.

“ *weighted blanket vibes* pic.twitter.com/QvKaSsQDRO— *bucatini tinsel* 🍷🍷🍷🍷 (@waddlefish) [December 12, 2019](#) ”

People who use the blankets swear that they calm anxiety and improve sleep. The weight presses on the user, which is said to reduce the cortisol stress hormone, while increasing production of serotonin, the chemical associated with feelings of happiness and well-being.

But, really, what we're talking about is people feeling the comfort and security of being cradled —even if it's by a blanket, rather than in the arms of a loved one.

In Japan, adult swaddling — or **Otonamaki** — is now a thing. After getting into a fetal position, the client is bound tightly in

sheets and then gently rocked by the practitioner, the way a mother would rock her newborn baby. It's the next best thing to crawling back into the womb, apparently...

We're also seeing an explosion in compression wear.

What once was exclusive to endurance athletes has become a common way for people to experience tactile pressure throughout their days.

“ *Athleisure meets anxiety therapy. You can buy compression socks, shirts, vests, and more. In an increasingly disconnected, unmoored world, do not underestimate the value of touch — even if it's coming from super-tight leggings.* ”

Wow, have we seen our relationship with animals evolve. We all know that **pet ownership** is booming around the world. **2. The pet therapist is in** In Korea, one in four households now owns a pet. I just learned that it's not uncommon for cat owners here to refer to themselves as their cats' "butlers." That speaks volumes.

The trend that particularly interests me in regard to pets is the real turnaround we're seeing in our relationships with them.

“ *It used to be that caregiving was pretty much a one-way street. Sure, our cats kept the mouse population under control, and our dogs warned us of potential intruders — even that 80-year-old grandma pushing a stroller past the house — but for the most part, it was OUR job to take care of THEM. Now, more and more people are considering their pets support animals — four-legged or winged or even scaly nonverbal therapists.* ”

Part of that goes back to touch. For some of us, hugging or petting or cuddling with our pets is the only form of sustained contact we experience in a day. Well, other than our compression socks...

This phenomenon has spawned a mini-industry. In the United States, the National Service Animal Registry — which sells official-looking animal vests and “support pet” certificates — had 2,400 animals in its registry in 2011. Today, that number is closing in on 200,000. Is it any wonder airlines are frantically crafting rules to stop people from bringing their support [peacocks](#) and squirrels on board?



Boomerang pet survey highlights role of pets within families

20 Jul 2017



Those extremes aside, pets truly are filling a gap in modern life — providing the comfort and unconditional love and physical affection so many of us crave. It's been found that petting an animal can lower heart rate and blood pressure.

Don't be surprised if more doctors start to prescribe pet ownership. We're even seeing more universities and workplaces bring in therapy dogs to serve as stress relievers and emotional outlets. (Mental health care is another huge trend right now.)

I have a friend whose phone blew up with email notifications one afternoon recently. She was driving and thought it was a client emergency, so she pulled her car over to see what was happening. As it turns out, her agency was having "puppy petting" sessions that afternoon, and people were freaking out because the online sign-up form wasn't working.

“ A little goat yoga for ya! pic.twitter.com/OhEYLnVgQQ — Ricardo (@LiLChampionATX) [December 10, 2019](#) ”

How far will this trend go? Well, we're already seeing goat yoga and cow cuddling — so pretty far! People are paying good money to do downward dog poses while being trod on by baby goats or to lounge in a pasture with their arms around a cow.

Physical touch + unconditional love + an inability to talk back = just what the doctor ordered.

3. I Heart Robot

Someone from R/GA marketing recently tweeted: "My phone just said, 'Welcome home,' and I instinctively replied, 'I love you.' Then I realised I meant it."

We may be interacting with our fellow humans less often, but we're more than making up for it with our digital interactions—and to the point at which we're **developing feelings for these devices**. Good and bad.



#FairnessFirst: Attention! Alexa and Siri are not real-life 'women in tech'!

Leigh Andrews 26 Mar 2018



Some of us interact with our smart speakers more than we do with family members. If you've ever found yourself bickering with your NUGU or GiGA Genie, you know how quickly those devices become members of your household. And how easily a love-hate relationship can develop.

“ I know people who have gotten into screaming matches with their Amazon Echos. Granted, they were the ones doing the screaming while Alexa calmly apologised for not knowing the information or responded with something infuriatingly random. I've also known people who have subsequently apologised to their Alexa, assuring her of their gratitude and affection. ”

You don't want to mess with the being controlling so much of your life — even if she is artificial and only sometimes intelligent.

I think we're right at the beginning of a new stage in our relationships with AI. As artificial intelligence gets more intelligent, we'll begin to rely on our devices to act as confidants, friends — even romantic partners.

Already, people are interacting with chatbots in lieu of flesh-and-blood therapists. And we're seeing all sorts of digital apps promising to improve our mental health—from Moodfit and MoodMission to Happify.



#StartupStory: iHappify, the new business on the block

Evan-Lee Courie 12 Apr 2019



In 2017, my former agency conducted a [global study](#) that found that one in four millennials believe it will be normal for humans and robots to develop deep friendships and even romantic relationships. In some markets, that figure was even higher — reaching 54 percent in China and 45 percent in India.

As developers figure out how to make our smart devices ever more personable, it doesn't take a soothsayer to recognise that a global population increasingly suffering from loneliness and disconnectedness will find in these devices a solution.

The question is: How will that solution affect our social fabric — and human-to-human relationships? Will the eventual perfection of AI make us less willing to accept human imperfections?

4. The power of purpose

I've always been a proponent of a bigger purpose. And I'm tremendously heartened to see the extent to which major corporations are stepping up to help **solve the world's greatest problems** — including some they had a hand in creating. (Think: Unilever and gender equality, or Walmart and sustainability.)

What companies of all sizes have come to realise is that they can do good things while also preserving — or increasing — profits.



How marketing with CSR at its heart can change the world

Leigh Andrews 14 May 2019



I'm witnessing that in the transformation of my own company, Philip Morris International. People hear the name and think "Big Tobacco," but I would not have joined a company whose sole objective is to commercialise cigarettes.

I have never smoked and am a two-time brain tumor survivor and the daughter of a man who died of lung cancer, so believe me when I say I am in no way, shape or form a proponent of cigarettes. In fact, I want to rid the world of them — and so does PMI. I joined the business nearly two years ago and have since been living and breathing its purpose of "unsmoking the world." What exactly does that mean?



Philip Morris opens first IQOS flagship in Africa

Lauren Hartzenberg 6 Aug 2019



There are around 1.1 billion smokers today, and the World Health Organisation estimates that around the same number will be smoking in 2025, despite best efforts to get them to quit. My job is to help persuade those adult smokers who otherwise would continue smoking to go smoke-free. To switch to better, scientifically substantiated alternatives.

We've already moved around 8 million people away from cigarettes. That's a tiny fraction of the world's smokers, but we're headed in the right direction.

I genuinely believe we can replace cigarettes with less harmful alternatives, if not in my lifetime, then in the next

generation's. And I believe, too, that the pressures on corporations to act in more responsible and socially proactive ways — pressure from their employees, their customers and, increasingly, their investors — is a trend with staying power.

In an era in which 71 of the world's [100 top revenue producers](#) are individual companies rather than countries, we can't afford to have it any other way.

5. Making every purchase count

It's not just companies that are making better use of their power. Consumers are, too.

The past decade has seen a real pushback against mindless consumption and disposable everything. We're seeing the rise of "[enough-ism](#)" — a movement that challenges the tenets of the modern consumer economy and advocates a more fulfilling approach to life.



Minimalism - the age of less is more

Yael Geffen 3 Jun 2019



The issue is simple: People are tired of living cluttered lives — surrounded by items they no longer want and never really needed. And they are exhausted by waste. By all the food they buy and end up tossing in the trash bin, because it's past its expiration date or has gone bad. By all the plastic they see choking the oceans and littering the streets. By all the excess consumption that is contributing to the world's woes, without providing any real sense of satisfaction, much less happiness in return.

“ Every purchase counts today, in a way it didn't a few years ago. I don't mean that people are carefully weighing every decision and buying only what they truly need. Nor do I think consumers are only purchasing items that are good for their own health and that of the planet. Far from it... ”

But what I am seeing is that far more people today are mindful of what they're buying. And when they mess up — by wasting money on some silly bauble or mindless extravagance or purchasing more fresh veggies than their family is going to consume in a week — they regret it. That's the part that's trending.



#BizTrends2019: Single-use plastic, circular economy, ethical supply chains and climate action to drive retail in 2019

Feroz Koor 25 Jan 2019



I'm also seeing a growing tendency to vote in the checkout line. Choosing to buy or not to buy a product because of its brand affiliation and whether its values align with their own. Refusing to visit a fast-food outlet because of the stance it takes on gay rights or women's reproductive freedom. Rushing to buy items from another brand, because it's supporting Candidate X or Issue Y.

And, increasingly, brands don't have the luxury of opting out by remaining silent. On the most divisive issues, consumers expect their favourite brands to take a stand.

6. Faux everything

I'm also seeing an interesting phenomenon emerge over **artificiality and authenticity**.

“ On the one hand, people are seeking an antidote to our high-tech, plastic-coated artificial world. We're craving things like artisan-made linens, handcrafted wooden cabinets and small-batch chocolate. On the opposite end of the trend, we're seeing the embrace of faux everything: [vegan leather](#), [plant-based burgers](#) and artificial diamonds, among them. What ties these two trends together is a sense of control. We want things the way we want them. ”

We want to fight back against our fast-paced, impersonal world by connecting in some small way with old-world artisans and local producers.



#CreativeMornings: How these dark chocolate makers stay Honest

Maroefah Smith 29 Oct 2018



We value the “realness” of a bunch of carrots we pick up at a local farm stand far more than virtually the same carrots sold by a nearby supermarket. In that less authentic setting, the carrots are no longer quite so real.

And we value faux versions of hamburgers, leather, diamonds and other goods because it gives us control over the ingredients we consume and the impact we're having on people and the planet.

If I buy a vegan X Burger (yes, that's an actual brand name) and cook it at home, I can see with a glance at the packaging that I'm consuming a burger made with 8 times less water, 9 times less land and 8 times less CO² than a conventional beef burger. It may be “fake,” but the feelings of having made an ethically superior choice are real indeed.



Spur launches new vegetarian and plant-based menu

19 Nov 2019



This trend goes back to being a smarter, more mindful consumer — and planetary citizen. It's all about consuming in a way that reduces our feelings of guilt and increases our sense that we're doing something that benefits the greater good.

7. The age of rage

I'm old enough to remember when the internet was considered a place populated mainly by geeks. Simpler times...

These days, the online world sometimes appears fueled 30 percent by memes and cat videos and 70 percent by **viciousness and vitriol**.



Grumpy Cat dies at age 7

20 May 2019



If you find yourself in a discussion online, don't even think of trying to make an opposing point or offer a bit of unaligned information. You'll be set upon by a pack of social media jackals, angry that anyone dared question their worldview.

The age of rage is a destructive and counterproductive force. It is making it nearly impossible for people to engage in meaningful discussions and compromise. And that, in turn, is making it increasingly harder for anyone to advance solutions to our most pressing problems. It's hard to get anything constructive done in the midst of a full-on ideological war.

There is one somewhat positive thing to come from the age of rage, however. I've found it refreshing in the last year to see more individuals (and brands) standing up to their bullies —naming names and taking no prisoners rather than remaining silent and hoping the to-do will die down quickly.



A communication era of toxic comments and bad ethics

Tinashe Zvakasikwa 16 Jul 2019



Philip Morris International lived in the shadows for quite a while, not establishing much of a public presence. That's a dangerous way to exist when the forces against you speak loudly and don't appear averse to bending the truth.

“ We're no longer in those shadows. We speak out immediately to correct falsehoods and engage freely with critics and supporters alike on social media and in other forums. In my view, the best way to combat rage is with reason. ”

8. To the bunkers!

One of the byproducts of this age of divisiveness and uncertainty that I'm seeing is a **bunker mentality**. Following the global economic depression and wars of the last century, a generation or more retained a survivor's mentality — being careful with their money, allergic to debt and leery of change.

We're seeing that again now, although with different permutations. In a number of countries, people are going in on full survivalist mode.

These so-called “**preppers**” are stockpiling weapons — OK, that's mostly a U.S. thing — and accumulating vast stores of food, bottled water and medicines. It's mainstream enough in the U.S. that discount store Costco sells a nine-month, four-person supply of emergency food for [just over \\$3,000](#).

“ preppers, you need this! pic.twitter.com/aZXTF9G7xR— Bob Kostic (@causticbob) [December 11, 2019](#) ”

Food and water supplies are just the start. Preppers also engage in survivalist training, including wilderness and emergency medical skills and self-defense. And then there are all those people who aren't willing to go all-out prepper, but who still view the outside world as a threat.

In the U.K., there's CCTV. In the U.S., there's home video surveillance, courtesy of Google Nest, Ring, Wize Cam and a bunch of other startups. Sales of smart home surveillance cameras are booming, with [Strategy Analytics forecasting](#) the global market to spike from \$7 billion in 2018 to \$9.7 billion by 2023.

Unit sales are expected to double over that period, to 120 million. In Western Europe, Centrica Connected Homes and Deutsche Telekom are driving the market for smart home monitoring and management. In Asia, Korea Telecom and LG U+ are among the leaders.



Nest looks to shake up home security

22 Sep 2017



Marketers will need to understand the implications of this bunker mentality across industries.

What sorts of investments make sense for people who think the world is about to implode? What products — other than

guns and cameras — will make people feel safer within their own homes? Are fears of what's to come going to cause young people to put off — or avoid — parenthood?

“ How can brands establish a sense of trust and security among consumers who have grown increasingly skeptical and skittish? ”

Uncertainty begets fear. And that has a strong influence on consumer behaviour.

9. Raising the drawbridge

That bunker mentality is also evident online. When the internet first went public, most people were suspicious and hesitant to provide much information, especially financial.

Why on earth would you give your credit card information to someone you couldn't see? Obviously, we soon got over that hurdle. By 2017, global e-commerce sales had reached \$29 trillion.

By the time social media came around — most notably Friendster and Myspace in the early 2000s, soon obliterated by the entrance of Facebook in 2006 — the internet was seen as a place for sharing, rekindling friendships, bonding with like-minded strangers and, as Mark Zuckerberg [put it](#), bringing “the world closer together.”



#BizTrends2019: The death of Facebook? Not quite. Meet the social media of the future

Leigh Andrews 29 Jan 2019



We're no longer feeling quite so “kumbaya” about it. [Juniper Research estimates](#) that cybercriminals will steal an estimated 33 billion records in 2023, up from 12 billion in 2018. [Cybersecurity Ventures predicts](#) that the annual cost of cybercrime will reach \$6 trillion by 2021, up from \$3 trillion in 2015.

It's a huge issue, obviously, and one that affects businesses, governments and individuals.

In 2020, I think we're going to see many more people rethink their relationship with the internet and social media — being far more zealous about **guarding their privacy, their anonymity and their sense of security**.



Why children's social media safety is in the spotlight after the wake of the #Momochallenge hoax

Leigh Andrews 6 Mar 2019



[Edison Research](#) found that there are 15 million fewer Americans on Facebook in 2019 compared with 2017. The most significant drop has been among the youngest users, ages 12 to 34. That's in line with [research from Hill Holliday](#), which found that a third of Gen Zs (people born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s) intend to leave social media altogether.

“ I think we can expect a lot more people to start questioning whether the value they receive from social platforms is worth the tradeoffs. And that's not just in relation to privacy and security, but also emotional health. ”

10. #MeToo 2.0

We're in a new phase of the #MeToo movement and the push to end gender inequality, sexual harassment and violence.

At the start of the movement, women all over the world — some famous, most not — spoke out about past transgressions against them and called attention to the issues (and some individual men) that need to be addressed.



#MeToo trends in SA as women share stories of sexual harassment

Julia Breakey 17 Oct 2017



In this new phase — both online and offline — we're seeing the results of people being "woke" to the issue. More people — women and men — are calling out sexism and unfair treatment based on gender wherever it exists.

The *Economic Times* recently [ran a headline](#) that read, "Indian-American MIT Prof Abhijit Banerjee and wife wins Nobel in Economics." (In their defense, it's an Indian newspaper, so it makes a measure of sense that they would call out Professor Banerjee rather than his French or American co-winner.)

Michael Eisen, a scientist from the University of California at Berkeley, was having none of it. He responded by tweeting:

“Congratulations to Esther Duflo and her husband and some other guy for winning this year's [#NobelPrize](#) in Economics— Michael Eisen (@mbeisen) [October 14, 2019](#)”

The tweet was funny, but it also was an effort to speak out on the continued marginalisation of women in the sciences. Women, too, are speaking up. When Ariana Grande was [bumped from last year's Grammy's lineup](#), the show's producer claimed it was because Ariana “felt it was too late to put something together for the show.”



#FairnessFirst: Taking action beyond #16DaysOfActivism

Leigh Andrews 2 Dec 2019



A few years ago, an artist — especially a female artist — would have remained quiet, unwilling to risk upsetting the powers that be or being labeled as “difficult” or “not a team player.” Not anymore.

Ariana Grande spoke up, accusing the producer of lying about her and saying she chose not to attend the awards because he had been attempting to stifle her creativity and self-expression. Her YouTube video of the song she had planned to perform has been viewed 312 million times. The Grammy's? Lowest ratings in years.



Equal pay is not a demand - it's a right

Marian Salzman 7 Feb 2019



Powerful men used to be able to count on women's reticence, embarrassment and fear of reprisals to keep them in silence. No longer. There's now power in going public.

11. The rise of the “ish”

There's [an article](#) in the *Atlantic* about singer-songwriter Bruce Springsteen being “Jew-ish.” Not Jewish, as in an adherent of the Hebrew faith. Jew-ISH, as in seeming like he could or should be a Jew.

In reality, Bruce is the son and grandson of Irish and Italian Catholics. According to some of his Jewish fans, though, he has the “soul” of a Jew.

“ *“Is Bruce Springsteen Jewish? Perhaps not,” @Eric_Alterman writes. “But world-famous rock stars don’t come any menschier.”* <https://t.co/vuoxSS9O73> — The Atlantic (@TheAtlantic) [October 1, 2019](#) ”

His lyrics and approach to life have given him honorary membership.

Also speaking to the trend is the popular U.S. TV show [Black-ish](#). It addresses the life and issues faced by a family that some people might not consider “black enough.” Rainbow, the mother, is biracial, which means her children are, too. On top of that, they live in an upscale white neighborhood and are surrounded primarily by whites at work and at school. The series raises some interesting questions about race and identity.

“ *I love seeing the rise of ‘ish.’ It’s a much-needed yang to the yin of hardline everything. I’ve heard people referred to as ‘old-ish,’ ‘preppy-ish,’ ‘conservative-ish,’ even ‘nice-ish.’ When so much of the world has settled into rigid ‘us vs. them’ rhetoric, it’s good to see some grey areas remain.* ”

12. Youth power

The final trend I’m going to share with you would be hard to miss.

Climate activist Greta Thunberg may be less than five feet tall, but she’s a giant. And she’s emblematic of a [new generation](#) — and form — of cause warriors.

Aside from Greta, there’s Malala Yousafzai, shot in the head by the Taliban for being outspoken about the rights of girls to be educated. She’s currently studying at Oxford.



The ultimate power of hope

Daniel Derksen 20 Nov 2015



And, in the U.S., there are the Parkland activists — Emma Gonzalez, David Hogg and others — who have won praise and condemnation for their efforts to promote gun control in the wake of their [high school being attacked by a gunman](#) only a year or two older than themselves. In just a few minutes, he killed 14 children and three faculty members and wounded 17 others.

What I think is notable about these activists, aside from their youth and courage, is the way they are choosing to fight. The Parkland teens and Greta Thunberg, in particular, have proved masterful in their use of social media. And — unlike most of their adult counterparts — they understand the value of humour, reason and even gentleness over anger and finger-pointing.

“ *Former first lady Michelle Obama offered a message of support to teen climate crisis activist Greta Thunberg after the 16-year-old was mocked on Twitter by President Trump: “Ignore the doubters and know that millions of people are cheering you on.”* <https://t.co/6MB5YZI2Ev> — CNN (@CNN) [December 13, 2019](#) ”

They recognise that progress relies on dialogue and shared understanding — and that neither is fostered by shouting.

A great example of their sly humour took place a couple of weeks ago when President Trump mocked Greta as “a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future.” She responded in the best way conceivable.

She didn't call him out for his mockery. She didn't tweet an offended response. No. She simply took his words and made them the profile statement on her Twitter account.

“ *Is so beautiful to see how Greta Thunberg makes Trump to go mad just by managing her anger brilliantly*
[#GretaThunbergOutdidTrump pic.twitter.com/HCN5IYI8kI](https://twitter.com/HCN5IYI8kI)— Kelli Marcolongo (@Kelmarcolongo) [December 13, 2019](#) ”

Perfection. She may have missed out on the Nobel Peace Prize this year, but she is unparalleled in the Art of Throwing Shade.

The approach we're seeing from these young activists fills me with hope. They're showing older generations that it's possible — and preferable — to be committed, focused and powerful without losing sight of their humanity or anyone else's. In the age of rage, that's a hopeful lesson indeed.

ABOUT MARIAN SALZMAN

Marian Salzman-known as one of the world's top five trendspotters - has a communications career that has spanned more than three decades, across multiple industries and the globe. She now heads up comms - , owned and paid - at Philip Morris International (PMI) as it embarks on its transformation to a smoke-free landscape...

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